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THE WORLD CONFERENCE FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF QUESTIONS TOUCHING FAITH AND ORDER

A WORLD MOVEMENT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

BY THE
REV. LEFFERD M. A. HAUGHWOUT

Ἵνα πάντες ἓν ὦσι, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἓν ὦσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας.

Ut omnes unum sint, sicut tu Pater in me, et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut credat mundus, quia tu me misisti.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

PRINTED FOR THE COMMISSION OF
THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
A.D. 1914

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A WORLD MOVEMENT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

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[*This paper is deemed worthy of publication by the Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church on a World Conference on Faith and Order, which, however, does not hold itself responsible for any statement or opinion therein expressed.*]

I. Conditions and Motives

Origin of the Movement

ON the nineteenth day of October, 1910, at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, assembled at Cincinnati, the Rev. William T. Manning, D.D., Rector of Trinity Church, New York City, introduced the following momentous resolution:

"Whereas, There is to-day among all Christian people a growing desire for the fulfilment of our Lord's prayer that all His disciples may be one; that the world may believe that God has sent Him:

"Resolved, The House of Bishops concurring, That a Joint Commission be appointed to bring about a Conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and that all Christian Communions throughout the world which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour be asked to unite with us in arranging for and conducting such a Conference."

This resolution was unanimously adopted by both the House of Bishops and the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, and the Commission was appointed, with the Rt. Rev. Charles P. Anderson, D.D., Bishop of Chicago, as its president. Immediately upon its passage, a prominent layman of New York pledged the sum of $100,000 to enable the Commission to carry on its work.

Its Significance

The significance of the action will be recognized when it is considered that this is the first time since the break-up of the sixteenth century that a definite proposal has been made for all Christian bodies throughout the world to come together for the discussion of their differences, with no other prescribed limitation than that of unswerving loyalty to their Divine Lord and Master. Proposals of unity have indeed been made heretofore, notably by His Holiness Leo XIII, by the Lambeth Conference of the Bishops

of the Anglican Communion, by the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists of our own country; but such proposals have never been more than expressions of willingness to discuss the subject of unity with any who so desire, and generally they have been accompanied by platforms of limitations. Pope Leo let it be known that the only unity to be considered was unity under the Papacy; the Anglican bishops prescribed the quadrilateral programme of the Bible, the Creeds, the Sacraments, and the Historic Episcopate; while the Presbyterians, upon one occasion at least, excluded any discussion of the question of the ministry. The proposal which is now made, however, and for the first time, is that we come together to discuss the questions of Faith and Order which divide us with no other condition than that of faith in the Person of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that everything else is waived as of no importance, or that any ecclesiastical body will be committed upon any point by the action of the Conference; but that representatives of different bodies may meet together, as the language of a later resolution of the Commission states, "for the definite purpose of considering those things in which we differ, in the hope that a better understanding of divergent views of Faith and Order will result in a deepened desire for reunion, and in official action on the part of the separate Communions themselves."

Breadth of Proposal

The extreme breadth of this proposal is evident. It is a platform so constructed, both in principle and in its careful choice of language, that it includes all orthodox Christian bodies, both Catholic and Protestant. All may participate without any sacrifice of cherished principle. The Ambassadors of the Papacy, the Bishops of the Anglican Communion and of the great Eastern Churches, and the representative ministers of the Protestant denominations, can freely participate without fear of misunderstanding. So sincerely desirous was the Convention of maintaining this principle, that it expressly stipulated in its resolution that other representative Commissions should be asked to unite in the work of arranging for and conducting the Conference. So that when the great Conference finally meets it will not meet under the auspices of the Episcopal Church, or of any other church. Having once initiated the movement, the Episcopal Church withdraws any

claim for leadership, and merges her Commission with the greater central Commission which will equally represent all participating Communions.

Attention challenged

In view of this significant movement for a World Conference of Christendom to consider the questions of Faith and Order which now divide us, it is well that all Christian people should acquaint themselves with the great facts and principles which are involved. For though all of us may not participate as individuals in the deliberations of this great Conference, whenever and wherever it may be held, yet the question must ultimately come back to us, both as individuals and as organized Christian Communions: "Are you ready for the fulfilment of the Master's prayer, that all His disciples may be one, that the world may believe that God has sent Him?"

To the end of inviting attention to some of the more important facts and principles concerned, let us consider, first of all, the present condition of Christendom, and the motives which are impelling the world movement for unity; secondly, the many difficulties and dangers which obstruct the way; and thirdly, let us endeavor to point out some of the broad general principles which must be taken into consideration in arriving at an effective and permanent condition of unity. (The writer has no ready-made solution of the great problem to offer. That can come only after it has been studied and prayed over from the many standpoints of those who are to participate in the Conference. But he believes that out of that common study and common prayer the hand of Divine guidance will point a way which will ultimately lead to a healing of our unhappy divisions.)

The First Requirement

Before undertaking to cure a patient, the physician must first diagnose the disease and know something of the causes which induced it. The healing of the wounds of Christendom, likewise, must first be preceded by a dispassionate, and at the same time sympathetic, knowledge of the conditions out of which they came into being. Fortunately, the "scientific temper," which distinguishes the present generation, has so cast its influence over the study of history that this is more possible to-day than ever before. We have come to realize the inviolable sanctity of a fact, and our

modern "venture of faith" is to dare to adjust our theories to our facts. It is because of this newly acquired boldness for truth that we have made the somewhat disconcerting discovery that the heroes of the past were not always heroic, nor the villains always so villainous as sometimes pictured. And so, too, the holy wars of faith which our ancestors waged so freely were not always unmixed with the baser elements of ambition and politics.

The Original Unity

Let us first sketch briefly the sad story of Christendom's divisions. For the first thousand years of the Church's history, with only occasional intermissions, it could be truthfully said that Catholic, *i.e.*, Orthodox, Christianity was substantially one. It was not so, indeed, from the standpoint of administration, or in the sense of uniformity of custom and ritual. Christendom bore, rather, the appearance of a vast but loose federation of national or racial churches grouped about the ancient patriarchal sees, but with several notable exceptions. Its unity consisted in the confession of a common Catholic Faith, a common historically derived ministry, and a substantial agreement in the use of Sacraments. This unity was practically exhibited in the free intercommunion of clergy and laity, and a carefully observed comity between the geographical units of the Church Catholic.

The First Great Schism

The first great division was that which separated the East and the West. The dissensions which prepared the way for it were of long standing, but the climax of actual and permanent schism was not reached until the 16th of July, 1054, when the papal legates placed a writ of excommunication upon the high altar of St. Sophia. The causes had been long accumulating. The foremost reason commonly assigned was a theological distinction with regard to the Holy Spirit; a distinction, however, which presents no insuperable difficulty at the present time either to Eastern or Western theologians. But behind this and other alleged reasons for the schism lay wide divergences of temperament and intellectual bias, and the old leaven of unholy ambition, envy, and jealousy. These were the real causes, upon one hand and the other, and the causes assigned were for the most part nothing more than concealing masks.

The next great schism, or series of schisms, were those which

took place in the sixteenth century. Abuses had crept into the Western Churches, all of which now acknowledged both the spiritual and the administrative headship of the Papacy. Some of these abuses concerned the popular theology of the day, some the worship of the Church; but those most keenly resented were abuses of ecclesiastical administration. The Middle Ages had also witnessed great political developments. The old feudal system, in which the king and his barons kept each other in mutual check, was transformed into an all but absolute monarchy, a kingly tyranny over nobility and commons alike. It was this combined condition of ecclesiastical and political disorder which characterized the latter part of the Middle Ages.

Schisms of the Sixteenth Century

It was at this juncture that the revival of classical learning, partially due to the fall of Constantinople, inaugurated throughout Europe an intellectual renaissance. It would be too much to attempt a definition of this movement; but we may say, at least, that it started men to thinking in a new fashion, untrammelled by the customary channels and conventions of thought. The scholars of Europe were intoxicated with the discovery, and immediately proceeded to reëxamine everything mundane and supermundane in the light of the "new learning." Nature, revelation, ecclesiastical and political constitution alike were all subjected to the process; and out of it came three notable revolutionary movements: modern science, an ecclesiastical convulsion commonly called the Reformation, and the rise of a new spirit of nationalism, which in some cases resulted in the birth of democracy.

It is the second of these movements with which we have to do; but the point must be carefully borne in mind that it cannot be isolated from the other movements and dealt with alone. The ecclesiastical and the political disturbances were inextricably commingled, and it is frequently impossible to determine where the religion ended and the politics began. And for the very reason that politics played so prominent a part in the Reformation, both in the anti-papal and in the counter-reformation within the Roman Communion, it followed inevitably that the baser elements of greed and personal ambition also entered into the combination. And so it is that we must scrutinize our Reformation heroes,

Mingled Motives

on one side and the other, with more than ordinary discrimination.

The Resultant Disunity

Western Christendom came out of the storm broken and disunited. Much good resulted; but the one great obvious fact with which we are concerned at present is that the venerable unity of the Church was destroyed. And more than this, the very terms and conditions of that traditional unity were in many cases wiped out. Newly formed standards of Faith came largely to take the place of the ancient Creeds; in many quarters the historic Ministry, which had hitherto served as the witness and guardian of unity, was abandoned, and new conceptions of the Sacraments and of the nature of religious authority completed the breach. Since the Reformation the tendency to separation has produced an indescribable array of rival sects and churches, differing from one another in innumerable points of Faith and Order. For when the old principle of unity as a divine ideal was abandoned, there was nothing left to check the centrifugal forces of private judgment and extreme individualism. Any one, according to the modern theory, has the moral as well as the external right to withdraw himself from the company of the faithful, and establish a rival sect of his own devising.

A Reaction

Such is the present condition of Western Christendom. But precisely as the political and ecclesiastical degeneracy of the latter part of the Middle Ages provoked a double revolution, so to-day, the disgrace of Christian disunity is awakening in our minds a sense of shame; and who knows but that it will provoke a new and better reformation,—a reformation which will retain all the positive gains of the sixteenth century movement, and add to them those priceless portions of the Christian heritage which were lost or forgotten? Preëminent among such restorations must be, of course, the recovery of the Church's ancient unity.

For the past two decades the great thought of the reunion of Christendom has been germinating in the hearts and minds of the leading thinkers of all Christian bodies; but the present proposal for a World Conference on the dividing questions of Faith and Order is an evidence that the germinating stage is past. The first green blade of a new period has appeared, a period of prac-

tical efforts for discovering the clue which shall lead us back to unity; and in God's own time, no doubt, the blade will be succeeded by the ear, and then by the full corn in the ear.

The Watchword of the Present

The watchword of the present stage is repentance: a deep conviction of the sin of dividing the Body of Christ, and a realization that we who maintain the divisions must share in the guilt. The candid historical investigations of recent years are throwing a new and saner light upon the conditions and religious movements of the past. Such notable scholars as Lord Acton, the Abbé Duchesne, Gairdner, Hunt, Pollard, Gardiner, McGiffert, and others, representing all schools of thought, both Catholic and Protestant, are dispassionately setting forth the truth that the great religious problems of the sixteenth century might have been solved in a different fashion. Without in any wise obscuring the sturdy faiths and heroisms of that stormy period, they are showing that there is no one religious body now existing which is not compelled to read its story with feelings of sadness and shame. *Our fathers have sinned, and we have entered into their inheritance.*

Preparatory Movements

Notable as it was, the proposal for a World Conference upon the dividing questions of Faith and Order was by no means an isolated incident. The thought itself had been germinating for many years, tentative suggestions had already been made in various quarters, and the way had been prepared by the successful launching of certain movements of a more or less kindred nature. The old Evangelical Alliance, though not including the Roman Catholic, Eastern, or Episcopal Churches, did much to bring together the divergent bodies of Protestantism. Within a smaller sphere, the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance instilled a conception of unity into the separated branches of Presbyterianism throughout the world. Within our own country, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America has familiarized many religious bodies with the idea of Christian Unity. Its most fruitful work has been that of achieving a considerable measure of coöperation in the solution of social problems in the larger cities; so that it is now a common thing for the leaders of all religious faiths to work together in perfect harmony for the betterment of the public welfare. (A recent example of this was seen in the Chicago Vice

Commission, including, as it did, priests of the Roman Catholic and the Episcopal Churches, leading ministers of the Protestant denominations, and Jewish rabbis.)

Both in Canada and the United States there have been significant movements to combine certain hitherto separated bodies of Protestantism; and although the differences between those bodies are comparatively small, and do not involve any of the greater principles which must enter into a world unity, these combinations are important indications of the general trend of the times.

The Edinburgh Conference

But the movement most intimately related to the one which we are now considering, and which may be reckoned as its logical antecedent, was the "World Missionary Conference," which met in Edinburgh. In the strictest sense of the word, it was not a true ecumenical conference, for although invited, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Churches did not see their way clear to participate. It came nearer the ideal, however, than any other assembly of modern times; for it included not only representatives of Protestantism, but of the Anglican Communion as well, which, after the Roman and the Eastern Communions, is the third largest ecclesiastical body in the world. This was made possible, however, only by a careful delimitation of the subjects to be discussed, and by the specific provision that no question of faith or order should be raised; the practical problems of missionary extension constituting the sole programme. It was projected, in other words, as a purely technical congress. But the spirit of unity was abroad, and the artificiality of the restrictions was quickly realized. They were not violated, indeed; but more than one eloquent voice protested that the problem of missions was the problem of unity; that as Christ Himself foretold, the belief that God had sent Him was dependent upon the absolute unity of His disciples. It was this conviction, this stone which the builders of the Conference rejected, which became the head-stone of the corner, the deepest and most lasting impression of the great assembly. And, appropriately enough, the very body which then insisted on the exclusion of questions of Faith and Order is the one which is now proposing another and greater world conference for the avowed purpose of discussing them.

What are the motives which lie behind this world movement

for the reunion of Christendom? Is it simply a product of sentiment? or is it, perhaps, nothing more than a reflection of the spirit of combination which characterizes the modern commercial world? If the movement were explainable in either or both of these ways, it would justly merit our suspicion; but it is not. It has its economic and sentimental aspects, indeed; but deeper and vastly more potent than these is the overwhelming conviction of the will of Christ, the Divine Founder and Head of the Church. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (St. John xvii, 20, 21.) And it has remained for the crusade of modern missions to sweep away the ingenious misinterpretations of these and other like utterances of our Blessed Lord, which for the last three centuries or more have blinded men's minds to the truth of His meaning. The missionaries of the Cross have come back from the front, from the advance line of the great Christian crusade, and have told us that the one supreme obstacle to the conversion of the world is the disunity of Christian forces. This is the unanswerable argument which is flung like a challenge into their faces: "When Christians are themselves agreed as to what Christianity is, then we will hear you." The fundamental problem of Christian missions is the problem of Christian Unity.

The Motives towards Unity

The Will of Christ

The Influence of Missions

And as we look about us upon the conditions here in the homeland, the conviction is forced upon us that here also the supreme obstacle to the increase of Christ's religion is the disunity of Christian people. It is the explanation of the anomalous fact that even in this so-called Christian nation the majority of the people profess, or at least practise, no religion whatever. Great numbers are alienated by the sad spectacle of our unhappy divisions; and the necessity of maintaining so large a number of organizations has so weakened the resources of the Christian body that its activities are seriously impaired. The poorly equipped churches and ill-paid ministries which characterize American Christianity can never hope to cope efficiently with the problems confronting us. It is because of our divisions, moreover, that we, as a Christian

Evils of Disunity

nation, present the amazing spectacle of attempting to educate our children upon a purely secular basis. Granted an enforced system of public instruction, which monopolizes all the time and energies of our children and from which all moral and religious instruction are rigidly excluded, what likelihood is there that the rising generation will be adequately trained in these most essential elements of education? The answer is obvious upon every hand; but the Christian forces of the land have not yet seemed to realize what a deadly blow this strange system is dealing to the cause of the Christian religion. And the only assignable reason for it is that we cannot agree among ourselves.

These, then, are some of the motives and conditions which explain and justify the great movement which has been inaugurated. But so much has already been said and written with regard to this particular phase of the subject, that we may assume a more or less general assent, and pass on to a consideration of some of the concrete problems which remain to be solved. The period of mere apology has long since ended, and we have entered upon a new era of constructive effort.

II. Difficulties to be Overcome

The difficulties which confront the cause of Christian Unity are legion, and nothing is gained by endeavoring to minimize their obstructive force; but discouragement, on the other hand, must be resisted as a species of treason. The chief dangers which the cause encounters at the present time are the many popular misconceptions of the object to be attained,—false visions of unity which would lead us away from the true ideal. For a long time, indeed, the conception itself was compelled to struggle with a widely spread theory that competition among religious bodies was stimulating, like competition in trade. Echoes of this belief are still heard; but no religious thinker of reputation would venture any more to defend it. A moment's sane consideration of the actual results of this sort of competition is enough effectually to discredit it.

Unity vs. Inorganic Union

A more vigorous enemy of the cause is the assertion that Christian people may attain to the unity which the Master com-

manded without affecting their present organic relations. This inorganic sort of unity, which is frequently advocated, is conceived of as "unity of heart and purpose," a general working together for the same great end, mutual charity and recognition. Its watchword is "unity in Christ," and its chief practical attainment is the free interchange of pulpits, and the broad assertion of interdenominational equality. But the theory is open to many criticisms, both theological and practical. In the first place, it may be urged that it does little or nothing to remedy the actual evils of our divisions: the curse of competition and the sad impairment of Christian resources. It glosses over the glaring fact that, however mutually charitable in their intercourse, the different Christian bodies are actually presenting widely different conceptions of the Christian religion, and are producing equally different types of Christian character. And this, to the thinking non-Christian, whether in our own or in foreign lands, is a most serious indictment of the whole Christian system. Within the Christian body itself, its inevitable result is the breaking down of all sound doctrine, the encouragement of religious indifferentism, and a sweeping away of the few remaining vestiges of Christian discipline. It is equally unsound from a theological standpoint. It forgets that the whole point of our Lord's injunction was that we might prove His Divine mission by our union with one another, by the unanimity of our testimony. And it overlooks the profound fact that a perfect "unity in Christ" must inevitably produce unity among ourselves. "Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." The Spirit of Christ can never tolerate a division in the Body of Christ.

The Weakness of Federation

Church federation, so called, is an offshoot from this theory. It is a practical effort to minimize the outward effects of disunity, without touching the source from which they spring. Instead of healing the schisms, it actually tends to perpetuate them by clothing them with a theory analogous to the principle of the federation of states. Aside from the perpetual danger which must always enshroud a union which is never free from the menacing spectre of *un*federated rights, this proposal is open to almost all of the objections which we have just urged against the theory

from which it springs. If the distinction may be allowed, it is a somewhat precarious condition of *union*, but it is not *unity*. At its best, it is nothing more than a substitute, and carries with it no guarantee against its own speedy dissolution in case of a difference of opinion.

Narrow Ideals of Unity

Another obstacle in the way is our tendency to narrowness of vision. So different are the extremes of teaching and practice, even among those who are thoroughly loyal to Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him as God and Saviour, that we sometimes find it difficult to conceive of their ever coming together in any sort of unity. So it is that many would have the future unity of the Church consist of a united and glorified Protestantism, with Catholicism left out. Others would have it the reverse. It may be, indeed, that the great final unity will be preceded by some measure of local unification within the spheres of Catholicism and of Protestantism; but it may be laid down as a primary principle that any ultimate vision of unity which is not large enough to embrace all, both Catholic and Protestant, who love and acknowledge the Lord Christ, can never fulfil the Master's injunction. And more than that: there is a grave danger in such narrow conceptions of unity, even in the preparatory stages; for if Catholicism and Protestantism solidify separately, without consideration of the further necessity of uniting with one another, the outcome will be simply a perpetuation of two extreme types of Christianity. Nothing could be more disastrous, or more insecure.

Protestantism needs Catholicism, and Catholicism needs Protestantism. We may differ in our estimate of their relative values; but most of us, surely, would be willing to admit that neither one nor the other has a supreme monopoly of all the elements which make for the ideal of the Christian religion. And we may assert, further, that no achievement of unity which is not enriched by all the manifold varieties of Christian truth and experience which are now held separately by different Christian bodies, whatever their comparative value may be, can ever hope to maintain itself throughout the future ages.

Danger of Haste

There is but one other danger of which we may speak at the present time; and that is the danger of undue haste, of impatience.

In the fire of our zeal and the largeness of our vision there is a possibility of moving too rapidly, of forcing the process of unity beyond the ability of the many elements concerned to adjust themselves to the change. As in the healing of a broken bone, the fractures of the Christian body must not be allowed to heal until all the parts are properly disposed. Difficulties of ancient standing must not be glossed over without genuine solution. Inherited prejudices must be fully satisfied, honest convictions must receive all due regard. If upon one side or the other there is strong adherence to some cherished faith, it must not be set down to narrowness, but must be dealt with in the spirit of love.

The Present Duty

Before unity can come, or even the first step towards unity, there must be mutual understanding. The present duty, therefore, is for Christian people of various names to seek a better knowledge of one another, and of their differing points of view. Free interchange of thought upon the various aspects of the great problem is a prime necessity. And this is precisely what the World Conference upon the questions of Faith and Order is intended to achieve.

III. Some Principles of Unity

Greatness of the Problem

Ready-made schemes of Church Unity are to be looked upon with suspicion; for whatever their plausibility, they underestimate the magnitude of the problem. The work of bringing together into one the scattered members of the great family of Christ is such an undertaking as no one mind is capable of achieving; nor is there any likelihood that it will be accomplished within a single generation. Like the construction of some vast mediaeval cathedral, it is a work of faith; and many minds and many generations, perhaps, must enter into its composition. But although we ourselves may see nothing more than the laying of the foundations, yet the vision of the final triumph of unity is always ours, to inspire and strengthen us for the great task.

But this does not mean that we should hesitate to attempt a solution of the problem. By all means let us do what we can. It is to this end, therefore, that I venture to suggest some of the principles which would seem to be involved in the future achievement

of unity. From the very nature of the case, this is debatable ground, and entire unanimity of opinion can hardly be expected. But understanding must come before agreement.

Unity does not involve Uniformity

The first principle to be suggested is that unity is not necessarily bound up with uniformity. It is possible for Christian people to achieve the very highest ideal of unity in Christ and unity with one another, and still present a considerable measure of divergence within certain broad spheres of Christian life and activity. This does not concern, it may be said in advance, the fundamental unity of Faith in the Divine Founder and Head of the Church, which has already been laid down as the basic principle of the movement. It pertains rather to such matters as Christian worship and ecclesiastical administration.

How Uniformity came in

This principle, it may be asserted, is both old and new: that is to say, it was abundantly recognized in the centuries prior to the Reformation; during the Reformation it was almost completely lost, and it is only now, in recent years, being rediscovered. During the bitter conflict of the Reformation period, the contrary principle of uniformity was seized upon by all parties as a weapon of offence and defence. Upon the Roman side, upon the Anglican side, and upon the Protestant side, absolute uniformity was insisted upon: uniformity, not only of fundamental beliefs, but of modes of expression, modes of thought, and modes of worship. It

Protestant Uniformity

was because of this iron-clad insistence that the Protestant movement broke up into so great a variety of rival denominations. A difference of opinion upon some minor point of theological speculation was a matter serious enough to create a permanent division. The English Church likewise enforced its Acts of Uniformity; and also the Church of Rome. With regard to the forms of Christian worship, the two latter communions accomplished a measure of uniformity which Christendom had never before known.

Anglican Uniformity

Before the Reformation the Church of England recognized and allowed several different liturgical uses, all of which differed from the uses which were in vogue upon the Continent. And within each diocese there was a considerable freedom in providing for the changing needs of the people. After the Reformation all England worshipped by the hard-and-fast rule of the Book of Com-

mon Prayer; and in Scotland, by the Book of Common Order. Upon the Continent, likewise, the different national churches had had their own national or racial liturgies: as the Ambrosian, the Gallican, the Mozarabic, and the Roman. After the Reformation the Roman liturgy was generally enforced upon the national churches which still remained within the Roman obedience. In other words, the wide and safe flexibility which characterized the Catholic Church in the West, in matters of ritual, and which in no wise interfered with its unity, gave way to absolute uniformity. And though expressed in different fashion, the same principle was adopted in the Protestant denominations; so that their types of worship to-day are almost as unchanging and unchangeable as in the case of the more liturgical bodies just mentioned.

Roman Uniformity

It may be that there was something natural and inevitable in this growth of uniformity within the separated sections of Christendom. At all events, let us not be hasty in condemning it. But however appropriate uniformity may be under such conditions, it never was, and we are safe in affirming that it never can be, a characteristic of Christendom united. The leading thinkers of the Anglican Communion, at any rate, of all parties, are agreed upon this point. Esteeming their own liturgy no whit less highly than in the past, they do not insist upon it as a condition of unity. They believe that within the broad confines of a united Church there is room for the Roman Liturgy, for the Greek Liturgy, for the Anglican Liturgy, and for no liturgy at all—save enough to guarantee the integrity of the Sacraments. The old difficult question of the form of worship, in other words, which was at one time a primary cause of disunity, they are willing to set aside in the interest of a larger and more primitive liberty.

New Anglican Attitude

Another conception to be unlearned by the relearning of an older one is that which confuses unity with uniformity of administration. To many minds it is difficult to conceive of one united world-wide Church apart from a highly centralized system of administration. But here again we must rediscover the old fact that in the ancient unity of Christendom uniformity of administration was unknown. Even in Europe, as late as the earlier part of the Middle Ages, at a time when the theory of Papal headship was

Unity does not involve Uniform Administration

accepted by all of the Western Churches, there was no such thing as a uniform, centralized administration. Rome was recognized, indeed, as the spiritual head of Western Christendom, and in great matters of common interest, whether in the defence or in the propagation of the Faith, all churches accepted her guidance. But in matters of local administration the various national churches were practically independent, and jealously defended themselves against any interference from without, even though it were from the Pope himself.

And so, in the future reunion of Christendom, it will not be necessary to secure a uniform, centralized administration. The various national churches may well be left to administer their own affairs, with the sole limitation that there shall be no local interference with matters of common or universal concern, such as the common Faith, the Sacraments, or the Ministry. These things must be left to the united action of the whole Church. How this united action should express itself is a problem still to be solved, but it should not be insuperable. The ancient method of great general councils would probably be the most feasible.

Question of a Visible Headship

Will there be any place in this future unity for a visible headship of any sort? This is an interesting and by no means unimportant question; and it is significant that more than one modern writer of distinctively Protestant principles has considered it seriously. Theoretically, indeed, there is no valid objection to such a headship, and there are some advantages in its favor.

Comprehensiveness

In keeping with this attitude towards uniformity in the community life of the Church is the new conception of comprehensiveness, which is the most characteristic note of the present movement. In all proposals of unity hitherto advanced, there has been a conscious effort to discover a minimum platform of essentials upon which all might stand together. For a long time this principle of finding the irreducible minimum of the Christian Religion was unquestionably assumed by all who were interested in Church Unity.

The Committee on Unity of the Lambeth Conference of 1908, however, enunciated a new and radically different principle. This principle was embodied in a striking address by the Bishop of

Chicago (now President of the Commission on a World Conference), shortly before the Cincinnati Convention. He declared that a religion of minimums could never truly pose as the religion of Jesus Christ, nor could it hope to challenge the admiration and allegiance of the world. For his part, he stood for a religion of maximums: maximum beliefs, maximum achievements, and maximum manifestations of the Spirit. And unity, he said, is to be won by giving rather than by giving up. It will never be reached by slenderness, but by fullness. Instead of approaching the great problem upon the basis of excluding everything from the future united Church which does not seem to pertain to the inner essence of Christianity, we must come together with the idea of mutually contributing to the common faith and to the common life. Let all of the separated parts of Christendom pour out the treasures of their several inheritances and of their acquired experience; and let them equally desire to receive from one another the gifts which they do not already possess. Let Catholicism add to Protestantism its spirit of worship, its sacramental life, its unwavering faith, and its rich heritage of continuity with the historic past. And let Protestantism, on the other hand, add to Catholicism its fearlessness of learning, its stern conception of individual responsibility, and its emphasis upon personal religion. So shall we have in the great Church of the future, not an impoverished and shadowy form of Christianity fenced about with barriers of exclusion, but a Church which is enriched with all the wealth of the Christian ages.

Catholicism and Protestantism Complementary

This does not mean, it is needless to say, that it will be a Church of contradictions, a reckless comprehension of faiths and anti-faiths; for no mere negation will enter into its composition. Liebnitz says somewhere, "Most scholars are right in what they affirm, but wrong in what they deny." Disregarding our denials, therefore, we shall hope to find unity upon the basis of positive beliefs.

There is one other important principle which I would mention in conclusion, not only because of its supreme theoretical importance, but because of its practical bearings. It is the principle of continuity. We have already emphasized the truth that no scheme of unity is worth considering unless it is *broad* enough to include

Continuity

all who are loyal to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, both Protestants and Catholics. But we may go a step further than this and affirm that no scheme of unity is worth considering which is not *long* enough to include the historic past, the living present, and the prophetic future in the one perpetual, organic Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The imperishable continuity of the original Christian body, manifested in history and guaranteed by our Lord's own promise, is, for nine-tenths of Christendom, already a cherished article of faith. Nor is it merely an object *of* faith, for it is equally a stimulus *to* faith. To those who conceive of the Church as not merely an organization of the present, but as actually continuous and identical with the Church of the Upper Room at Jerusalem, — the Church which was founded by Christ and His apostles, — there is a ground for confidence and an impulse to faith which cannot lightly be estimated. It is in this sense that the Church is conceived of as a living witness of the Resurrection; *for she was in Jerusalem at the time, and conversed with her risen Lord, and she is in our midst to-day!* Her faith is no mere matter of copied and recopied documents, but of living experience.

The Will of Christ

The relation between unity and continuity, moreover, is close and vital. In the first place, continuity is essential to that complete unanimity of the Christian witness which the Master asked for in His prayer, that all His disciples may be one; that the world may believe that God has sent Him. The unity which He desires is not simply a unity of the first century, nor of the tenth, nor the twentieth, but of all the Christian ages; the united and harmonious witness of ten thousand generations. To this end, therefore, we must bind the present to the past, and both of them to the future.

Essential to Permanent Unity

In the second place, the principle of continuity is essential to the maintenance of unity when once achieved; and in this respect it involves both the outward order and the inward faith. What superiority can any one generation claim over any other, especially when it is a generation of the past? Obviously none. If unity were accomplished, therefore, upon a basis of purely twentieth century ideals, what assurance would there be that a self-important twenty-first century would not completely overturn

it? Quite as obviously, none. A unity, in other words, which appeals simply and solely to the wisdom of a single generation must always be a precarious unity. It is a case of *one against an ever increasing number.* But the principle of continuity teaches us that we should base our edifice not only upon the wisdom of the fleeting present, but upon the united wisdom of all the Christian centuries. Wherever we find the golden thread of continuity running down through the centuries, whether of order, or of faith, or of worship, we may rest assured that it draws its life from causes and demands which are in their nature universal. And if we would build an enduring edifice, therefore, we must see to it that these priceless threads of continuity are woven into the fabric of its walls. This does not mean a craven submission to the dead hand of the past, but a wise recognition of those religious elements which are either universal in their nature or rest upon universal causes. Of such a sort are the Faith and Order of the Historic Church; and for this reason, if for no other, we must stand for an outward and visible continuance with the mighty past. If the future unity of the Church can have the unity of the ages behind it, it can boldly await the oncoming centuries, however self-important they may be. Instead of one against an ever increasing number, *it will be an ever increasing number against one.* Continuity with the future can only come from continuity with the past. "Continuity" is simply another word for continuous unity.

Summary of the Condition of Unity

Such, then, in brief outline, are some of the conditions which seem to define the great unity of the future, the ideal for which we are laboring. (1) Though based upon one Holy Faith, and drawing its life from one Divine Head, it will not be characterized by outward uniformity of worship, or by a centralized uniformity of administration. (2) It will be a broad comprehension of every positive aspect of Christian faith and experience; not an impoverished and shadowy form of Christianity, but a Church which is enriched with all the wealth of the Christian ages. (3) The unity for which we pray is not simply a unity of the present generation, but of all generations; not merely of a cross-section of Christendom, but of its whole length and breadth, from the Day of Pentecost to the Day of Judgment.